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NEWS RELEASE

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CAMAS COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$307,000 DOLLAR INVESTMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

Last year, Camas County residents and businesses received \$307,000 from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 1,000 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Camas County ranks number 43 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars.

The disbursement of state and federal tax funds amounts to \$293 for every man, woman and child residing in Camas County. This includes citizens who may not receive a single direct service from the Department. The statewide average is \$839 per capita.

The Department distributed \$1.15 billion statewide in 2004. These funds came from Medicaid, additional payments to hospitals, Food Stamps, the Idaho Child Care Program, the Women, Infants and Children nutritional program, foster care and a variety of other assistance programs.

"This is an investment for all Camas County residents," says Health & Welfare Director Karl Kurtz. "These are tax dollars put to good use because they are used to help people become healthy and productive. This money goes to foster care for children in crisis, substance abuse treatment, child care so parents can work to support their family, and dozens of other badly needed services."

"This is as much about sustaining communities as it is investing," adds Kurtz. "By providing programs that support people, we are helping communities and their residents build the endurance and strength they need to remain vital. Everyone profits from this investment, not just those who use Department programs. This isn't just me pounding my chest. That's what community leaders tell us."

Camas County also received an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) grant totaling more than \$28,000 to purchase more equipment for rescue services. “This money is really important,” says Lesia Knowlton, the training officer for the Fairfield/Camas County Volunteer Fire Department. “We bought ten two-way radios so we have contact with everyone in the service. We need the radios to cover the 1,100 square miles in our county. The rest of the grant was for a spreader and cutter and ramjacks. These are used to extricate people from car wrecks.” Two years ago, the fire department and EMS unit bought an ambulance with a similar grant through the Department.

Last year, the Medicaid Division spent \$228,000 on health care for residents of the county, double the amount spent in 2003. Most of those dollars were spent with health care providers elsewhere because there are so providers few in Camas County.

Department spending helps people, and it has an upside for business, according to Idaho economist John Church. “This is not lost money. The spending is an investment. It goes back into the economy. If an employer came to town and spent this much money we would be elated. People need to remember that a big chunk of this is federal money which is a huge return on our taxes. This comes back and helps stimulate the economy and it helps people.”

Kurtz says, “Not only are Department programs a human investment, but they create jobs and maintain healthy businesses. These dollars recycle numerous times in each community and help us keep the high quality of life we enjoy in Idaho. This is a wise use of taxpayer dollars because the money spent in the community often stays in the community. The dollars are spent again and again to help create jobs and an infrastructure that provides healthy and safe neighborhoods.”

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(Editors: Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 or Regional Director John Hathaway at 316-0620 for more information.)

**More information on Health & Welfare's
investment in every Idaho County
can be found online at
<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov>**